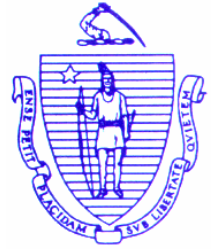




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Marine Fisheries Advisory

**STRIPED BASS REGULATION CHANGES
INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
ALL FISHERMEN IN MASSACHUSETTS**

During the promulgation of new fishing regulations, Division of Marine Fisheries has received some correspondence opposing any changes to the Commonwealth's striped bass fishing rules. After extensive public hearings, the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission approved recommendations for change in 2003 that will allow recreational anglers to possess up to two striped bass per day provided they are 28 inches long or greater, and a commercial quota of approximately one million pounds; the commercial fishing season will begin on July 6 with a 40-fish daily possession limit, a minimum fish size of 34 inches, and a consecutive four-day fishing week beginning on Sunday of each week, all status quo measures.

In essence, we have increased recreational possession from one to two fish and increased the commercial quota from 800,000 to 1,000,000 pounds. Contrary to what some members of the public believe, that *"these changes will trigger a massive increase in the total mortality of the striped bass and will without question inside of a few short years force actions reminiscent of the restrictions of the 80's,"* increasing recreational and commercial harvest of striped bass by provisions contained in Amendment 6 will not result in the same harvest rates observed during the "pre-stock collapse" period.

The most extensive resource exploitation occurred in the early 1970s when exploitation rates approached 60%. Today, we are below 30% and likely will not exceed 30% even after Amendment 6 increases are adopted. In fact, safeguards built into Amendment 6 simply do not allow for a return to "collapse" conditions; immediate management actions are required should spawning stock biomass or young-of-year production drop or F rates exceed the thresholds.

Harvest rates established by Amendment 6 are well within limits that will sustain biomass levels. Given that the major spawning stocks continue to produce large year classes every two to three years, stock biomass will presumably continue to grow; perhaps reaching population sizes that are not healthy given the capacity of some nursing areas.

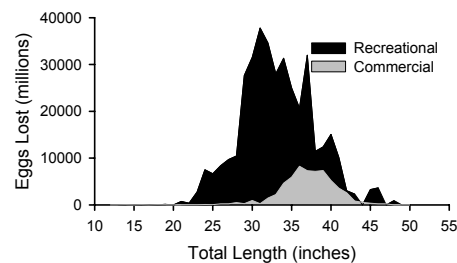
In Massachusetts, we expect our recreational harvest to increase by about 21% from current levels by adopting a 2-fish daily possession limit with a 28-inch minimum size, however this only equates to a 6% increase in the overall removal of striped bass from the stock. Planned commercial and recreational harvest increases for all states (if taken) amount to less than 10% more bass taken (total striped bass deaths including natural mortality, release mortality and harvest) annually than in the prior year.

An Agency of the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement
David M. Peter, Commissioner

While I encourage individuals to exercise responsible fishing practices by never taking more than what they intend to consume, allowing up to two fish per day is an appropriate action completely consistent with current stock conditions and Amendment 6. The same is true for commercial quota increases, but opposition here has more to do with individual values and beliefs than science and fishery management.

Over the past two decades, we have witnessed the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) striped bass conservation programs prevent overfishing and maintain over time abundant, self-sustaining stocks of Atlantic coast striped bass. These conservation programs and management measures continue to be based on the best available science. Whether or not striped bass management has been successful in achieving fair and equitable management results throughout the range of the stocks and for all user groups will remain debatable for a long time to come; these measures are meant to assure such equal access to the resource now and in the future.

Eggs Lost Due to Harvest and Release Mortality



Eggs Lost Due To Harvest

